

A SASSANIAN SILVER PHALERA AT DUMBARTON OAKS

ANDREW ALFÖLDI

with

A Contribution On The Stamps

ERICA CRUIKSHANK

THE object illustrated in figure 1 was acquired by the Dumbarton Oaks Collection in 1952, and is said to come from Istanbul.¹ It is a convex mask made of a thick sheet of silver bearing the features of a human face in repoussé technique. The length is 13.2 cm., the width 12 cm., the over-all depth about 4 cm. The weight of the object is 173 gr. Chemical analysis by Dr. R. J. Gettens of the Freer Gallery has shown that the silver contains more than 10 per cent copper.² There are also traces of gilding. A worn line around the periphery, about 8 mm. from the edge, seems to me to indicate that the object was fitted into a leather frame. This would agree with the interpretation of the mask as part of the trappings of a horse, an interpretation to be considered presently. A thick loop of silver wire, roughly rivetted to the top of the face with two nails, is a later addition. It may be contemporary with the Byzantine control stamps of which, perhaps because of the high percentage of alloy, there are only three instead of the usual five. Normal Byzantine practice called for such stamps

to be applied at the time of manufacture to guarantee the quality of the metal.³ In this case, however, the stamps were added subsequently, as is clearly indicated by their placement under and at each side of the chin, i.e. on the least prominent parts of the exterior, rather than out of sight on the back. By the addition of the handle the object was adapted for possible use as a cup,⁴ and my conjecture is that by means of the stamps it was validated for sale in the Byzantine world.⁵ If, however, the Byzantine stamps mean only a secondary approval by the stamping authority, what was the original purpose of our object, and when was it made? Comparison with Sassanian toreutic analogies supplies a ready answer to these questions.

First, let us compare our mask with a silver vase in the Hermitage in Leningrad, which bears the features of a female head (fig. 2).⁶ Prior to sustaining

³ L. Matzulevitch, *Byzantinische Antike* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1929), p. 1.

⁴ We know of similar drinking cups in Teutonic and Turkish treasures of the early Middle Ages, such as those of Szilágy-Somlyó and Nagyszentmiklós; they were fastened to the belt with buckles. But our object was used within the Empire, where only the barbarian soldiery would wear a cup on a leather belt.

⁵ As R. Ettinghausen has kindly pointed out to me, we also know of the same process operating in the opposite direction; an Islamic stamp validated a Byzantine weight under the Khalif al-Walid (cf. G. C. Miles, *A Byzantine Weight Validated by Al-Walid*, Numismatic Notes and Monographs, No. 87 [1939]).

⁶ [I. I. Smirnov] *Vostochnoe serebro* (St. Petersburg, 1909), pl. 48; J. Orbeli and C.

¹ The accession number is 52.9. Our thanks are due to Mr. J. S. Thacher, the Director, and to Professor Ernst Kitzinger, Director of Studies at Dumbarton Oaks, who gave us their active help in the preparation of these notes.

² The exact data of this analysis will be published shortly by Rutherford J. Gettens and Claude L. Waring ("The Composition of Some Ancient Persian and Other Near Eastern Silver Objects," in *Ars Orientalis*, II, 1956). As these authors will show, the Sassanian disc in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore (no. 57.707) also has a copper content of more than 10 per cent.

an injury, the bridge of the nose on the mask had a sharp profile similar to that of the head on the vase; the tip of the nose and the nostrils are identical on both. The protruding upper lip of the female face is clearly duplicated on the male face, despite the mustache, and the lower lip is also similarly rendered. Both faces are abnormally broad. In both instances the eyes, which are executed in the same technique, are set too close, and their outer ends are slanted upwards. These are not mere stylistic conventions, but reflect Mongoloid racial components in the region where these two silver objects originated. Finally, both works have in common the fact that the face is framed in a peculiar way. While on the cup the warrior's countenance is framed by a square-cut "bob" and a curving mustache, on the vase the broad face and slightly oblique eyes of the girl are surrounded by jewels and conventionalized foliation. Hers is a type well-known from the charming pictures in Persian miniature art.

The style of the haircut which frames the male mask is the same as that on a round medallion (fig. 4), which decorates the harness of a hunting horse on a famous Sassanian bowl (fig. 3).⁷ This important parallel provides not merely another stylistic link with Sassanian silver, but proves beyond doubt that our "cup" was originally a phalera of the same sort as that which decorates the royal huntsman's horse. It is, in fact, the first known specimen of its kind.

In the culture of the Eurasian steppes, a phalera bearing human features, and hanging from a harness served as a substitute for the head of the slain enemy.⁸ In both East and West, more-

over, medallions of precious stones or precious metal on the bridles of the aristocratic mounted shepherds have a history of their own as badges of distinction and honor.⁹

Our Sassanian phalera acquires a probable *terminus ante quem* through the Byzantine control stamps, of which Miss Cruikshank has kindly undertaken a detailed discussion. It is a welcome confirmation of my views on the chronology of these hitherto unknown stamps that Miss Cruikshank, with her wide knowledge of the field, has independently arrived at the same conclusion as I. She will show, as became clear also to me, that in the time of the Emperors Phocas and Heraclius, Christian iconographic elements appeared on Byzantine stamps. Through these elements, as well as in other details, the stamps of the phalera can be related to stamps of those reigns, and while they are likely to be somewhat later, they can hardly have been applied after the outbreak of the iconoclastic controversy in A.D. 726. Everything combines to suggest a post-Heraclian, pre-Iconoclast date for our stamps; the most likely period being the second half of the seventh century.

We thus gain a chronological point of reference which helps to date a whole group of Sassanian silver objects connected with our phalera.¹⁰ The anthro-

de Nagyszentmiklós," *Cahiers archéologiques* V (1951), pp. 123-149; especially p. 136.

⁹ Cf. my notes on this topic in *Der frühromische Reiteradel und seine Ehrenabzeichen* [Baden-Baden, 1952], pp. 17-25; "Zu den römischen Reiterscheiben," in *Germania*, XXX [1952], pp. 187-190; also my notes in *Ur-Schwetz*, XV (1951), 66 ff. I hope to publish soon a large chalcedony phalera with a Medusa-head, in the collection of Prof. Mirko Roš in Baden (near Zürich).

¹⁰ The best survey of the chronology and stylistic development of Sassanian silver vases is that by Kurt Erdmann, "Die sasanidischen Jagdschalen," in *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, LVII (1936), pp. 193-232. More recent literature is to be found in the papers of R. Ghirshman, "Notes iraniennes VI, une coupe sassanide à scène de chasse," in *Artibus Asiae*, XVIII (1955), pp. 5-19; K. Erd-

Treuer, *Orfèvrerie Sasanide* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1935), pls. 42-43. The provenance of the vase is unknown.

⁷ Smirnov, *op. cit.*, pl. 33; Orbeli-Treuer, *op. cit.*, pl. 3; A. U. Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art*, IV, (London and New York, 1938), pl. 217 (for the date, see below).

⁸ Cf. my observations in "Études sur le trésor



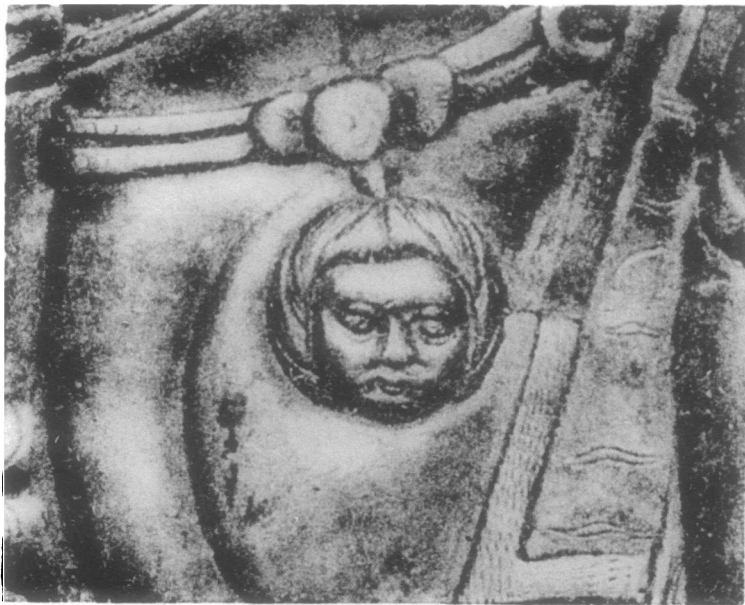
1. Dumbarton Oaks Collection. Sassanian Silver Phalera (1/1)



2. Leningrad. Hermitage. Sassanian Silver Vase



3. Leningrad. Hermitage. Sassanian Silver Plate with Hunting Scene



4. Detail of figure 3



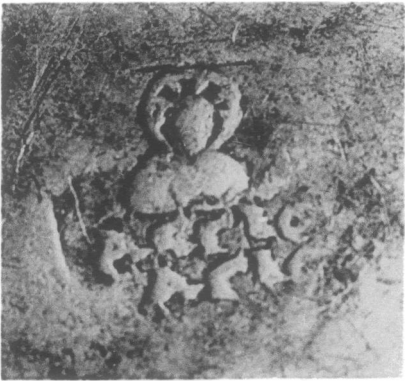
5. Leningrad. Hermitage. Sassanian Silver Vase from Baku, detail



6. Detail of figure 1. Central Stamp (2/1)



7. Detail of figure 1. Left-hand Stamp (2/1)



8. Detail of figure 1. Right-hand Stamp (2/1)



9. Possible Reconstruction of Right-hand Stamp, figure 8



10. Dumbarton Oaks Collection. Stamps on Silver Plate, No. 51.23 (2/1)



11. Baltimore. Walters Art Gallery. Stamps on a Silver Hanging Lamp (2/1)



12. Leningrad. Hermitage. Stamps on a Silver Casserole (2/1)

pomorphic vase illustrated in figure 2 has been compared already. This, in turn, is related to a large number of silver vases with reliefs, on which the following characteristic motifs recur: the rope-like horizontal molding with pendant leaves on the shoulder of the vase;¹¹ the rosettes above the forehead and on each side of the face;¹² the border composed of "three mountain" motives, with engraved flowers, below the face;¹³ the conventionalized foliate design framing the cheeks;¹⁴ with its deeply cut leaves and flowers recalling the techniques and motives of Sassanian stucco reliefs;¹⁵ the Senmurv on the neck;¹⁶ and, finally, the woman in one of the medallions on the other side of our vase.¹⁷

The Royal Hunting bowl illustrated in figure 3 would provide independent chronological evidence if E. Herzfeld's interpretation of its incised inscription were accepted.¹⁸ Herzfeld read the inscription on the reverse as "Ordered by Sharven, Masmoghan of Demavend."

mann, "Zur Datierung der Berliner Pegasus-Schale," in *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, LXV/LXVI (1950/1951) (1952) *Archäologischer Anzeiger*, pp. 115-131; J. David-Weill, "Une coupe d'argent de style sassanide au Musée du Louvre," in *Monuments et Mémoires, Fondation Eugène Piot*, XLV (1951), pp. 117-121.

¹¹ Smirnov, *op. cit.*, pl. 51, no. 85 gives the prototype of this ornament, analogies of which are to be found in: Smirnov, *op. cit.*, pl. 55, no. 89; Orbeli-Treuer, *op. cit.*, pls. 35-38; Pope, *op. cit.*, pl. 216 C.

¹² Smirnov, *op. cit.*, pl. 18, no. 43 (with symbolic meaning), pl. 46, no. 80; Orbeli-Treuer, *op. cit.*, pls. 12, 15; Pope, *op. cit.*, pls. 207 B, 208 B, 229 B.

¹³ Pope, *op. cit.*, pl. 207 B.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pls. 204, 215 B, 216 C.

¹⁵ A good example of this parallelism is a stucco-fragment in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, no. 39.493; the bird in the scroll-pattern is closely related to that on the silver plate published by J. David-Weill, *op. cit.*, pl. XV.

¹⁶ Cf. Orbeli-Treuer, *op. cit.*, pl. 40 (our fig. 5).

¹⁷ Compare Orbeli-Treuer, *op. cit.*, pl. 42 with Pope, *op. cit.*, pl. 233 A.

¹⁸ E. Herzfeld, *Archäol. Mitt. aus Iran*, IV (1932), pp. 151-154, K. Erdmann, "Die sasanidischen Jagdschalen," p. 222.

This would mean a date at least as late as ca. A.D. 700, but I am informed by Professor W. B. Henning of London University that Herzfeld's reading was in error, and that, aside from its general epigraphical character, the inscription provides no chronological clue.¹⁹

A word should be added regarding the historical events which may have swept our silver phalera from Persia into the Eastern Empire. Shortly before the Byzantine control-marks were stamped upon it, the Persians and the Byzantines were at war with each other. Our phalera, which probably adorned the bridle of an aristocratic Persian knight, may have reached the domain of Heraclius as booty; and was then transformed into a drinking cup by the addition of a handle, and authenticated as commercial silver by the control-marks.

A. Alföldi.

THE STAMPS ON THE PHALERA

The three Byzantine stamps on the lower part of the convex face of the phalera are symmetrically disposed, one in the center, below the chin, cut off by the edge of the bowl, and the other two on either side, about an inch below the tips of the mustaches. Among the large number of Byzantine silver stamps known to us at the present time, the stamps on the phalera have no close counterparts. In design they are unique, and no other instance is known where only three stamps have been applied to a single silver object. Nevertheless, these

¹⁹ Professor Henning writes: "I have looked up Herzfeld, *A.M.*, IV (1932), 151, but I have not got Smirnov's work at hand. However, Herzfeld's drawing is for the moment sufficient to show that his reading of the third line of the inscription as 'Sarvën Masmoy' is impossible. Actually, the line gives the weight of the plate '75 drmsng' (75 weight-dram-s). It is really quite plain (once one has got it), and Herzfeld's reading qualifies as a momentary lapsus. While this leaves you free to propose an earlier date, I should say that the type of writing excludes a very much earlier period. I do not think a date prior to the 7th century is possible."

stamps are a part of the general development of silver stamps in the Byzantine period, and may in fact serve to indicate the direction of that development.²⁰

Two of the three stamps on the phalera, the stamp in the center, below the chin (fig. 6) and the stamp on the left side of the face from the spectator's point of view (fig. 7), are similar to each other and may even be identical. Although they are both badly worn, they were once circular in shape, and each contains a standing, nimbed, orans figure with an inscription on either side. The inscription on the left-hand stamp is sufficiently preserved for the letters H AΠI(A) to be clearly distinguished at the left of the figure, identifying it as a female saint. The letters to the right of the same figure are probably part of her name: a θ may be seen, and possibly a T, an A and an I, but these are not distinct, enough to enable us to identify her. The letters of the inscription in the second stamp are even less clear although AΠI and θ may be seen.

The stamp on the right side of the phalera, facing the spectator (fig. 8), contains two lines of inscription, and a bust of Christ with a nimbus in which may be seen three arms of a flaring cross. Two lines of the border of the stamp are clearly visible, showing that it was hex-

agonal in shape, but the angle formed by these two lines is greater than that formed by the two alternate sides of a regular hexagon, so that this figure must have been somewhat irregular. In the first line of the inscription, four letters are quite clear, the first, A, and the last three, Γ, I, and O. The second letter may be a second A; together, these letters suggest the reading A, AΠIO(C). The first letter of the second line of the inscription may perhaps be a Γ; the second, third, and fourth letters are again A, Γ, and I; the fifth letter seems to be an O; this line might then be read Γ, AΠIO(C). A possible stroke beneath the A of the second line of the inscription indicates that there may once have been a third line with the letters, I, O, C, of which no other traces remain. These last letters, together with the first letter in each of the above two lines of the inscription would then read AΓ(IOC). The accompanying drawing (fig. 9) illustrates how the letters could have been originally disposed. The combination and placement of all the existing letters, together with the additional space available within the border of the stamp suggests that we may here read three words of the Trisagion: ἅγιος, ἅγιος, ἅγιος.²¹

²⁰ The following conclusions are based on an extensive study of all Byzantine silver stamps known to us at the present time. If some of the necessary detail is lacking in support of the present argument, it is because there is not space here to examine the entire series of stamps and to discuss the results obtained thereby. The writer hopes to publish a detailed discussion of the problem within a reasonable length of time. This work was undertaken under the very kind supervision of Prof. Ernst Kitzinger. I am deeply grateful to the scholars of Dumbarton Oaks for the Fellowship which made it possible, and for the most generous assistance of each one of the scholars to whom I turned for help. I should also like to thank the curators of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, and the Metropolitan Museum in New York for placing their collections at my disposal, thus affording me every opportunity of studying the objects themselves.


²¹ The Trisagion, in different forms, was probably adopted in the Christian liturgy in the fifth century, and is found in most of the Eastern liturgies thereafter (cf. Baumstark, "Der Orient und die Gesänge der Adoratio Crucis," in *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft*, II [1922], pp. 2-4; Engberding, "Zum formgeschichtlichen Verständnis des ἅγιος ὁ θεός, ἅγιος ισχυρός, ἅγιος ἀθάνατος — ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς," in *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft*, X [1930], pp. 168-174; L. Jalabert and R. Mouterde, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie* [Paris, 1950], *passim*). It is found frequently in inscriptions in Syrian churches of the fifth and sixth centuries, and we find the word ἅγιος thrice repeated on the banners of the archangels on the triumphal arch of the apse in S. Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna (M. Mazzotti, *La basilica di Sant'Apollinare in Classe* [Rome, 1954], pp. 168-169). The three words are also inscribed on a ring in the British Museum (Dalton, *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities* . . . [Lon-

The stamps on the silver phalera may be compared with a large group of stamps which we designate by the term "Imperial." These Imperial stamps, among which belong the greater number of Byzantine silver stamps that have come down to us, have certain common characteristics that enable us to date them to the reigns of individual emperors from Anastasius I (A.D. 491–518) to Heraclius (A.D. 610–641). It is known that stamps of this type were applied in Constantinople as an indication of quality.²² The group is distinguished by

don, 1901], p. 19, no. 120). The ring is engraved with a small bust of Christ accompanied by two angels, and was acquired together with a second ring, almost identical in design but with no inscription, which was found with coins of the Emperor Heraclius (A.D. 610–641). If the ring can be dated in the seventh century, it may have some bearing upon the question of the date of our stamp which will be discussed below. Mr. Marvin C. Ross showed me that similar examples may also be found on a pressed gold plaque in Naples ("... non più tardi del VII sec.") and on an amulet (C. Cecchelli, *Il Trionfo della Croce* [Rome, 1953], pp. 170, 194, figs. 82, 30). In the above, as in later monuments, the Trisagion is generally associated with adoring angels, and it is unusual to find the invocation accompanying only a bust of Christ as found on our stamp. However, on two lead tesserae published by G. Schlumberger, the word *ἄγιος* is repeated three times, inscribed around a single nimbed bust similar to the bust in the silver stamp (G. Schlumberger, *Mélanges d'archéologie byzantine* [Paris, 1895], pp. 307–308; and Froehner, *Collection Photiades Pacha*, II [Paris, 1890], p. 49, no. 679, pl. II. The drawings reproduced by Schlumberger do not show the cross in the nimbus, but it is quite evident in the catalogue reproduction of Froehner). The association of the Trisagion with a bust of Christ, without accompanying angels, seems to lose the sense of an Invocation, and to acquire, rather, the connotation of a title. The words used in this sense could have some reference to the long theological controversy over the Trisagion which began in Antioch in the second half of the fifth century, but this question would require a more detailed examination than is possible in this context.

²² The most comprehensive discussion of Imperial silver stamps to date is found in the study of the silver in the Hermitage by L. Matzulevitch (see footnote no. 3). His work should be used in conjunction with the catalogue of Byzantine stamps by M. Rosenberg, *Der Gold-*

the fact that five different stamps, each of a specific shape and design, were consistently applied to each individual silver object. We illustrate here, as examples of this Imperial stamp group, the stamps on a plate in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection which have not previously been published (fig. 10).²³ On the bottom of the plate five stamps are found within the circle of the footring: A square stamp contains the monogram of Heraclius in a form used at the beginning of his

reign, , on either side of which

is inscribed the word (Λ)AMIPOTAT(OV). In a round stamp is a portrait of the Emperor Heraclius, beardless and with a halo, which can be dated in the year A.D. 610;²⁴ around the bust are inscribed the letters of a name, not all of which are distinct. The monogram of the name CE(PTIOV) is found on a cruciform stamp, and around the arms of the cross are the letters of the name (CIC)INN(IC). In a rectangular stamp with arched top, there is a second bust of Heraclius identical with that in

schmiede Merkzeichen, IV (Berlin and Leipzig, 1928), pp. 614–740. Further documentation and a detailed examination of the conclusions here summarized will be presented in the separate study referred to above.

²³ Cf. *A Handbook to the Dumbarton Oaks Collection* (Washington, D.C., 1955), p. 56, no. 133, ac. no. 51.23. This plate belongs to a set of three plates in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, all with identical stamps. Where the reading of the stamps is not distinct on this plate, it has been taken from the stamps on one of the other two plates of the set.

²⁴ The only time that Heraclius shaved his beard was in the year of his accession in A.D. 610; he had previously worn a "long, bushy beard," but when he became Emperor he shaved. The portrait of the Emperor, beardless, is also found on his coinage and, very soon after his accession, the coins represent him with a close, bushy beard; so the beardless Heraclius was probably portrayed on silver stamps for only a short period of time. Cf. J. B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire*, II (London, 1889), p. 208, n. 2 (Bury quotes the description given by Cedrenus). Mr. Marvin C. Ross kindly brought this to my attention.

the round stamp, again the monogram CE (PTIOV), and the name KOC(MAC) inscribed around the outside. Lastly, the fifth stamp is hexagonal. It contains the monogram of Heraclius identical with the monogram in the square stamp; above the monogram is a small bust with a crossed nimbus; and, on either side of the stamp, are inscribed the letters of a name which is not distinct.

The main characteristics of the stamps described above are common to almost all the stamps belonging to the Imperial group. The individual names inscribed on the stamps change, as do the monograms and the portraits of the reigning emperor; certain details, as we shall see presently, vary; but the main attributes — the bust of an emperor, the monogram of an emperor, and an inscribed name — are found on one or more of the five stamps on each silver vessel for a period of about one hundred and forty years.

The stamps in the Imperial group were generally applied before the vessel was finished. A close examination of the Dumbarton Oaks plate shows that considerable work was done on the lathe after the stamps were applied, for there are scratches in the area around the footring where the silver has been smoothed off after the process of soldering, and these have worn away the edges of the stamps nearest the footring. There are also worn circles around the centering point which break into the cross stamp. It would seem that the plate was finished only after it had been stamped, and we thus have a *terminus post quem* for the date of the plate itself. Since the interval between the stamping and the completion is not likely to have been great, the plate may be ascribed to A.D. 610, or just after.²⁵

²⁵ The observation that the stamps were applied before the object was finished was made upon examination of all silver objects with Imperial stamps that were available for personal study, a total of about twenty-five. The same fact was noted by Matzulevitch on the

If we compare the stamps of the phalera with those of the Imperial group we notice, in the first place, that there are certain marked differences: a. The stamps on the phalera have no imperial features, neither the bust of the emperor, nor his monogram. b. The Imperial stamps contain no standing, full-length figures like those on the phalera, and, to our present knowledge, no names which may be intended to signify a saint. c. In the Imperial stamps there are no specifically religious inscriptions such as the words beneath the bust of Christ in the hexagonal stamp of the phalera, only proper names. d. As Professor Alföldi has observed, unlike the majority of Imperial stamps, the stamps of the phalera were applied after the decoration of the silver object had been completed, for they are symmetrically disposed on the vacant areas where they would be most plainly visible, and on the outer surface of the bowl; whereas on all objects with Imperial stamps they are applied on the reverse, or on the side away from the decorated surface, and the decoration generally breaks into the stamp. Moreover, a small, round projection on the inside of the bowl shows where the stamp was struck, denting the silver; while on comparable objects with Imperial stamps, the stamps follow the curve of the metal, indicating that the silver was moulded into shape after the stamp was struck.

The probability that the stamps were applied after the object was finished lends support to the suggestion that the phalera was taken as booty and stamped later, and that the stamps, therefore, are no guide as to where the object was made. It is known that stamps were sometimes put on captured objects for,

objects in the Hermitage, and by Dalton on at least one object in the British Museum (cf. "A Byzantine Silver Treasure from the District of Kerynia, Cyprus, now Preserved in the British Museum," in *Archaeologia*, LVII (1900), p. 168). It is frequently sufficiently clear from photographic reproductions alone.

according to the ninth-century historian Theophanes, when Nicephorus carried off the treasure of the Khan of Bulgaria, he had his stamps put on it, "thereby making it his own property."²⁶

The stamps on the phalera and those of the Imperial group have also certain common features: a. The shapes of the stamps on the phalera, two round and one hexagonal, reproduce two of the shapes from the Imperial group of five stamps. It should be observed, however, that in all the examples belonging to the Imperial series that are distinct enough to be measured, the hexagonal stamp is remarkably regular, and it is rather to be expected that stamps of a recognized official character, such as those of the Imperial series, should be carefully executed. The hexagonal stamp on the phalera, as has been noted above, is far from regular; whether the drawing reproduced in figure 1 approximates the original or not, the irregular shape of the stamp, and the somewhat haphazard disposition of the existing letters of the inscription suffice to indicate that it was inferior in technical quality to the hexagonal stamps of the Imperial series. b. In the hexagonal stamp of the phalera, and in the hexagonal stamp on the Dumbarton Oaks plate, we find a small nimbed bust. In both examples the nimbus contains a cross and thus denotes Christ. This feature is not, however, common to all the hexagonal stamps in the Imperial group. From the reign of Anastasius to Heraclius two types are generally found: the hexagonal stamp with a cross (or two crosses) above the Imperial monogram, and the hexagonal stamp with a small bust above the monogram; this bust is nimbed, but the nimbus does not have a cross. The hexagonal stamp on the Dumbarton Oaks plate, together with two others on plates of the same set, affords our only example of the crossed nimbus on stamps of the Im-

perial series. Nevertheless, the stamps on the Dumbarton Oaks plate clearly belong to the Imperial group, and, as we shall see, it is significant that both the stamp on this plate and the stamp on the phalera contain a small bust of Christ.

The problem of the provenance of the silver objects with Imperial stamps cannot be discussed in this note. Nor is this the place to explore the system implied by the use of the emperor's portrait and monogram, nor the meaning of the individual names inscribed on the Imperial stamps. For our purposes, however, it is sufficient to say that the Imperial stamps represent a form of official control. The stamps of the phalera may be examples of another stamping system that existed under different auspices, in or outside Constantinople, either contemporaneously with the Imperial system or after it had fallen into disuse; or they may represent a later development of the same Imperial system.

An example of stamps that are closely related, but do not belong, to the Imperial group may be found on a silver hanging lamp in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore (fig. 11).²⁷ The shape and number of the stamps on the lamp, as well as many details, are identical with stamps of the Imperial series, and the monogram in the square stamp is that of the Emperor Phokas (A.D. 602-610). But the bust of the emperor generally found in the round stamp has been replaced by a group of figures. The central figure has a nimbus, and stands in an orans position not unlike the figures in the round stamps of the phalera. This figure is surrounded by smaller figures looking upwards, forming a composition similar to that of the Virgin and Apostles in the representation of the Ascension. Also, these stamps like those on the phalera, are of a quality very inferior to that of the Imperial group, and they seem to have

²⁶ Theophanes, *Chronographia* (ed. de Boor, Leipzig, 1883), p. 490, 20-25.

²⁷ Diehl, "Un nouveau trésor d'argenterie syrienne," in *Syria*, VII (1926), pp. 105-122; Rosenberg, *op.cit.*, pp. 730-731.

been applied after the vessel was finished. The lamp shows no sign of scratches damaging the stamps, such as were found on the Dumbarton Oaks plate, and there is a slight bump in the center of the bottom of the lamp around which the stamps are imbedded deeply and clearly in the silver, showing no trace of the marks of the lathe. This would seem to suggest that the soldering of the footring was smoothly finished off beforehand. Moreover, the stamps of the lamp exhibit several other unusual features which cannot be described in the present context, and there is every indication that, although clearly influenced by the Imperial stamps, they were not a part of the same system.

In spite of their differences, however, the stamps on both the lamp and the phalera have, as we have observed, certain features in common with the stamps in the Imperial series which suggest that, even though they may not have belonged to the same system, or to the same area, they may have been subject to a comparable development. The gradual evolution of the Imperial series can be traced from the initial experiments under the rule of Anastasius I down to the close of the reign of Heraclius, and it is remarkable that toward the end of the series a religious element seems to have been introduced in the Imperial stamps similar to that which we have observed in the stamps of the phalera and the Baltimore lamp. We have already noted that the bust of Christ (with a crossed nimbus) appears on an Imperial stamp in A.D. 610. On another hexagonal stamp of the Imperial group, — on the Obolensky Casserole in the Hermitage in Lenin-grad (fig. 12) — the small bust over the monogram, sometimes found in the hexagonal stamp, has been replaced by a much larger, nimbed bust, and the monogram of the emperor has been entirely omitted. This bust has none of the attributes of the emperor found on the bust in the round stamp of the same piece;

the form of dress, the close-cropped hair, the absence of a cross in the nimbus suggest that it may be a military saint. These stamps are securely dated between A.D. 610 and 629, in the first half of the reign of Heraclius.²⁸

The introduction of a religious element in silver stamps calls to mind a similar development in coin types of the seventh century. During the first reign of Justinian II (A.D. 685–696) the bust of Christ is found for the first time on a coin, and it appears frequently on the coinage of successive emperors thereafter excluding, of course, the coinage of the Iconoclast emperors.²⁹ The religious element found in stamps of an official type during the reign of Heraclius, and in imitative stamps during the reign of Phocas, seems, therefore, to anticipate a development of the same element in Imperial coinage.³⁰

On the above evidence, the stamps of the phalera may be placed toward or after the end of the evolution of the Imperial stamps, for the religious iconogra-

²⁸ The date of the stamps has been discussed by Matzulevitch, *op.cit.*, p. 75; also by the same author, "Argenterie byzantine en Russie," in *L'art byzantin chez les Slaves*, deuxième recueil dédié à la mémoire de Théodore Uspenskij, II (Paris, 1932), p. 300, pl. XLIV:2. These stamps show certain other small differences from the "normal" Imperial stamps we have described, but there is no doubt that they belong to the Imperial series. The differences, together with further evidence in support of the date, will be put forward in the detailed publication proposed.

²⁹ Wroth, *Catalogue of the Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum*, II (London, 1908), pl. xxxviii: 15 and following.

³⁰ Other examples occur where the stamp-types anticipate the types found on coinage. We mention a minor instance: the portrait of the emperor found in the Imperial stamps closely resembles the portrait of each successive emperor as it is seen on his coinage, but on a stamp on the Stuma paten (Peirce and Tyler, *L'art byzantin*, II [Paris, 1932], pl. 140b), which may be dated in the reign of Justin II (A.D. 565–578), the bust of the Emperor wears a diadem with a small, circular, raised part in front. This type of diadem has not, apparently, been found on coinage before the reign of Maurice Tiberius (A.D. 582–602). Cf. Wroth, *op.cit.*, I, pl. xvii:7.

phy of the stamps on the phalera, like that of the round stamp of the Baltimore lamp, seems to be a reflection of the religious element in the last of the Imperial series. We have, unfortunately, no stamps for comparison which may be securely dated after the death of Heraclius (A.D. 641). But the complete absence of the emperor's portrait or monogram on the stamps of the phalera suggest that, by contrast to the stamps on the Baltimore lamp, they may be later than, rather than contemporary with, the Imperial stamps. The outbreak of the Iconoclast controversy in the early eighth century temporarily put an end to the development of the religious image, and this interruption lasted for more than one hundred years. It is unlikely that

the phalera stamps, with their religious imagery, belong to this period. It is theoretically possible that they could be as late as the ninth century, for the story of Nicephorus quoted above indicates that the practice of stamping silver survived the Iconoclast crisis; but the similarities observed between the stamps of the phalera on the one hand, and those of the Imperial group and the lamp of Phocas' time on the other, make it seem unlikely that there should have been nearly two centuries between them. It is suggested, therefore, that the stamps on the Sassanian silver phalera were applied in the second half of the seventh century, or at least before the outbreak of official iconoclasm in A.D. 726.

Erica Cruikshank